

Feedback



& the

Barn Owl Trust Annual Report 2022-2023

Issue 70 / Autumn 2023



Reg Charity No: 299 835
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

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Devon TQ13 7HU

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Cover Photo: Alistair Marsh - www.alastairmarsh.co.uk
This photo also features in our new 2024 Calendar which is available to buy for £8 via our website or the enclosed sales leaflet.

Feedback is produced for supporters of the Barn Owl Trust by staff and volunteers.

A big thank you to everyone who provided words and pictures for this issue.

Proofing: The BOT Team & Ali Ramsden




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Send your contributions - news, letters, pictures and information to: Feedback, Barn Owl Trust, Waterleat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU

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Diary Dates

October 2023

Tues 24th 10am - Autumn Colours Walk

December 2023

Weds 6th 3pm - Annual Prize Draw

Tues 12th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

Fri 22nd 4pm - Office Closes

January 2024

Weds 3rd 10am - Office Reopens

February 2024

Tues 20th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

March 2024

Thurs 7th 10am - Winter Bird Walk

For more information visit the Events Diary on our website.

Contact us on info@barnowltrust.org.uk or call the office to book a place - booking is essential as places are strictly limited.

Join us for practical work in the LLP

All events 10am - 4pm:

September 2023

Tues 12th & Thurs 14th

October 2023

Tues 17th & Thurs 19th

November 2023

Tues 14th & Thurs 16th

December 2023

Tues 12th & Thurs 14th

January 2024

Tues 16th & Thurs 18th

February 2024

Tues 13th & Thurs 15th

March 2024

Tues 12th & Thurs 14th

Hello and welcome to the 70th edition of Feedback! We are delighted to be celebrating our 35th year as a registered charity and we hope you agree that the latest edition of our bi-annual magazine provides an insight into the important work we do for conservation and for Barn Owls in the UK.

I am writing this from a pretty cramped meeting room, full of desks and shelves, where all our staff are installed while we await the completion of our new offices. We are all very excited about the prospect of having warm, insulated and well-lit offices by this winter. It's just amazing how rapidly the new walls and roof are taking shape. Read all about it on page 6. Thanks must go to those wonderful folk who left gifts in their wills which has enabled us to replace our old ramshackle home with a sustainable, environmentally friendly new place to work. We are truly grateful.

We've had a pretty normal (busy) summer so far with enquiries and in our hospital and rehabilitation facility. I'm sure you will be keen to read about the young owls we have helped during the season and the outcomes we've achieved. It's a very rewarding part of our work and the donations we receive help enormously to allow us to continue providing care for these young birds. Read all about them on page 4.

Our Intern Warden, Harry, has provided a great update on the LLP on page 5 – this wonderful nature diary shows what a difference the work of the Barn Owl Trust, and our fantastic volunteers, has made to the land we manage for wildlife. Camera traps have allowed Harry to capture sightings of wildlife that we had no idea were on the reserve. It's been fantastic to see the 'hidden' nature around us.

You may be aware that earlier this year we suffered a 'hacking' episode on our Instagram account. This caused us untold concern as we attempted to recover our account. We reported the fraud and did everything in our power to resolve the situation, as you can read on page 9, but in the end, a knight in shining armour came to our rescue and all was happily resolved. Grateful thanks to that man, who is one of our fantastic supporters.

There is still time to join in our Christmas Prize Draw, which will be drawn on 6th December. Once again, we have some fabulous prizes on offer to tempt you to purchase draw tickets. A full list is on our website and you can read more about this fundraising event on page 9. We hope you enjoy taking part!

With this edition of Feedback, you will find our Christmas Sales leaflet, featuring a delightful range of Christmas cards, our unique 2024 calendar, and lots of gift ideas for Christmas. We hope you find some items of interest. All the proceeds of sales go to support our vital mission, of course. It feels a wee bit early to be mentioning the festive season, but surely never too early to buy those Owl-y Christmas gifts!

The Barn Owl Trust's Annual Report and Statement of Financial Activity is included in this edition of Feedback on pages 10 - 16. Publishing the report is a legal requirement and includes the Chairmans' Report on the overall health of the Trust. We've included these within Feedback to save on our printing and postage costs. We hope that you find it interesting.

We do hope that you enjoy reading our 70th edition of Feedback. We are delighted to say to our supporters that we feel we are going from strength to strength, and that thanks to support, legacies and donations we hope we have very much 'futureproofed' the Trust, with plans for more research, exciting projects and the new offices to take us into the next 35 years. Your support is terrific, and we all want to say thank you so much for continuing to think of us, and the work we do. Especial thanks must go to Josh (see page 17) for his valiant efforts running the London Marathon earlier this year! Thank you Josh!

Gill Gant
Office Manager

BOT News

Long Lasting Legacy

Earlier this year we heard from solicitors dealing with the estate of the late Gillian Grimwood, that the Barn Owl Trust was named as a beneficiary in Ms Grimwood's will. We understood that the legacy was 'substantial' but were totally stunned, as you might imagine, to learn that we were to receive just over £700,000. This is by far the largest gift the Trust has ever received. To say we are grateful would be an understatement indeed. Although the monies were not received until April, our accountants wanted the legacy shown in our accounts for the year ended March 2023 so our income for the last financial year was extremely unusual and rather staggering!

The legacy is going to make a huge difference to the work we can do over the next few years and the Trustees have already held an extraordinary meeting to decide how best to use the funds. Exact details are still to be confirmed, but what we do know is that the funds will allow us to undertake more important research, increase our conservation and education work, and ensure we have sufficient resources to continue doing what we do for years to come. A heartfelt thank you to our kind benefactor.

Mammal Society Collaboration

Early in 2023, a Mammal Society volunteer identified a new shrew species in Britain, not only new but invasive(!) – the Greater White-toothed Shrew (GWTS). This large and relatively boisterous shrew first appeared in Ireland in 2007 where it rapidly expanded its range and had a negative impact on the diminutive Pygmy Shrew. In fact, where Greater White-toothed shrews became common, Pygmy Shrews seemed to disappear entirely. So it was with some alarm that the invasive 'GWTS' was discovered in England. Will it have the same impact on our Pygmy Shrews? Will it impact our Common Shrews? – a species that is absent from Ireland.



Keen to gather data on the extent of the population across Britain, the Mammal Society have invited us to collaborate on a new project named 'Searching for Shrews'. Barn Owls consume far more shrews than people could ever find so searching for evidence in owl pellets is by far the best way of monitoring small mammal distribution. Additionally, Barn Owl pellets are by far the easiest to find because of their longevity. Pellets lying in dry roost sites can easily last more than a year.

Assuming the collaboration goes ahead, our primary role will be in helping the Mammal Society find hundreds of volunteers, dotted around the UK who are willing to collect, freeze, and post Barn Owl pellets directly to them. This will involve us mailing contacts around the country who we know already check Barn Owl sites under licence, but also contacting members of the wider public who have contributed records via our UK-wide Barn Owl online survey website- www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk.

Another key element of our involvement will be helping the Society put together a methodology which will avoid the disturbance of nesting Barn Owls and help to ensure the pellets arrive in useable condition. Once pellets arrive, the Mammal Society will get them analysed, using their own volunteers, but we may well be involved in the data handling and write up. If you'd like to be involved, please contact us directly if you can collect pellets, or contact the Mammal Society if you'd like to help analyse them.

News Bites

BOT Website Revamp

The Barn Owl Trust website is currently undergoing a much-needed over-haul! We will be keeping all of the information, but it will have a much more modern look, will hope to be more user-friendly and work on all devices. This is a really big project, and we hope to launch the new design later this year.

Devon & Cornwall County Shows

We attended the Devon County Show in May and the Royal Cornwall Show in June with our beautiful exhibition trailer. Members of our Conservation Team were present each day to speak to the public, take down records of Barn Owl sightings, give advice and hand out information. Folk had a chance to see our nestboxes up close and we also had some of our lovely owl gifts on sale to raise funds, as well as the Wheel of Wildlife for the public to spin and win a prize! We never raise enough funds to cover the cost of being at these events but hope that the shows will raise our profile and the awareness of the plight of the Barn Owl and its environment.

Owlets Kids Club

Our Junior Friends scheme, aka the Owlet Kids Club, is due a fresh look and some new ideas! Jess, our Admin and Education Assistant, has a background in outdoor and environmental education and is keen to give the scheme a make-over. Over the coming months we hope to be busy designing a new Owlet Welcome Pack with some new fun educational resources, more info to follow in Feedback 71 - watch this space!

ABOSM Update

Work is progressing in the background on building an online version of the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course. There have been some delays due to the seasonal limitations of filming but we hope to have the course ready for Spring 2024. The online BOESS course was very well received and we already have a waiting list of people keen to undertake the ABOSM training having completed our foundation course.

Radio Devon Interview

On the 25th July, our Head of Conservation, David Ramsden, was interviewed by Rick Edwards on BBC Radio Devon. Although the Barn Owl Trust has been talking publicly about climate change since 1988 this is the first time that one of us has ever been interviewed on the subject. David described the situation we are in globally (heading for 3.2 degrees Celsius by 2100) and the effects this is likely to have, not only on humanity, but on Barn Owls and other wildlife.

Bird News

During the spring, there's always a surge of enquiries concerning owlets that are found on or near the ground. Fortunately, many of these can be resolved by telephone or email, in conjunction with the advice supplied on the Trust's webpages. This spring has been no different, which is good because it suggests that there's no particular shortage of owlets hatching. Nonetheless, it has been a relatively quiet season at the bird hospital so far, although the breeding period is far from over. In fact, we are scheduled to receive two more young Barn Owls from the RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Hospital in the very near future.



'Holly' and 'Rowan' in the nest space provision in the BOT barn
Photo by Mateo Ruiz

Since February 15th this year, we've received one Sparrowhawk, four Tawny Owls, three Barn Owls and one Little Owl. The Sparrowhawk was picked up by our Head of Conservation on the Trust's Lennon Legacy Nature reserve. The beautiful rufous barring on the bird's underside identified it as a male, and male Sparrowhawks usually weigh somewhere between 130 – 180g. However, this individual was emaciated, weighed an appalling 112g, and sadly survived for a mere two hours at the Trust's facilities.

On March 16th, a Tawny Owl was brought to the Trust after it was found with an injured wing. Closer inspection revealed a serious compound fracture with no hope of recovery, so the decision was taken to end the bird's suffering as quickly and painlessly as possible. A dazed adult Tawny Owl found in late April at a nearby road junction yielded a more encouraging outcome. We administered fluids and food and kept the owl here for five days. During this time, it began to eat well, and its weight increased by nearly 20%. Happily, this enabled us to arrange its release, which was successfully carried out on April 24th. In early May, a concerned farmer brought a Tawny Owl fledgling to be checked over. However, the youngster was fighting fit and the relieved finder quickly returned it to where it had been found. As young Tawny Owls are fed by their parents long after they leave the nest, this one stood every chance of receiving those vital calories after night fall.

On May 4th, another adult Tawny Owl was brought in after being picked up on a country lane. To the disappointment of ourselves and the person who had found the owl and kindly brought it to us, the poor bird had not survived the journey. Inspection revealed a completely dislocated left hip, an injury that must have prevented the owl from catching any food. As it was extremely underweight, starvation was the probable cause of death.

On June 7th, an adult Barn Owl was picked up on the Southwest coast path east of Plymouth. Apparently, it had been able to fly, albeit weakly, and after some initial hand feeding 'June' began to

feed herself. She gained a little weight over the following two days and we were quietly hopeful that a recovery was imminent. This made our surprise all the more bitter when we found she had died overnight, after just four days with us. We found that her weight had dropped away sharply during her last 48 hours, despite the food she was eating, so her ultimate demise remains something of a mystery.

Four young owls are currently receiving care with us. A Tawny Owl that has been with the Trust since early May, plus two Barn Owls and a Little Owl that all arrived in mid-June. The young Tawny Owl could have been returned to where it was found if circumstances had been different. Our normal recommendation is to leave a Tawny Owl owlet where it is, or just raise it up off the ground. However, 'Tavy' was on the ground next to a busy footpath that is very popular with dog-walkers, and all the nearby trees were mature with no low branches. The risk of being hurt by passing dogs was clearly high, so Tavy is awaiting release from the Trust's static release aviary, and this will probably take place in August.

Our recommendations when finding a young Barn Owl are completely different to those for a young Tawny Owl. This reflects big differences in behaviour between the two species, with young Barn Owls receiving all their food from the parents at the nest site. Therefore, when 'Holly' the Barn Owl owlet was found on the floor of a barn, we hoped the barn owner might be able put her back in the nest site. However, there was no Barn Owl nestbox in the building, and the owner was very dubious about ever finding exactly where the owlet had fallen from. As a result, we received Holly at the Trust, where she is now growing fast and developing healthily. On June 28th, she was moved to a nest space that is built into our barn where the nestboxes are built. This will provide her with a base for what we call a 'young brood release', whereby young owls are fed by someone while they go through the fledging process. On June 27th, another young Barn Owl was brought to the Trust, this time the sole survivor of a brood of four. 'Rowan' has recovered well and has just joined Holly in the nest provision in the barn.



'Humbug' the Little Owl
Photo by David Ramsden

Finally, a young Little Owl arrived at the Trust on June 28th with a clean break to a major wing bone (the humerus). After a number of phone calls, Seymour Vets advised us to strap the bird's wing with a full examination programmed for Monday 3rd. The vet will hopefully pin the wing in place and there will be scope for release. If 'Humbug' cannot return to the wild, then we intend to allocate an aviary in the sanctuary, where all our resident owls are healthy and enjoying the mild weather.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Conservation and Science Officer

LLP Update

March started with some much-needed colour as we saw the first Lent Lily Daffodils appearing in Forde Orchard and Primroses popping up along the hedgerow boundaries in North Park. We were treated to fantastic views of a Sparrowhawk flying over the Winter Bird Crop on the 1st and we were pleased to witness a pair of Mandarin Ducks frequently visiting the Flo Pond at dawn and dusk during the month. The dead Ash tree next to the river came down overnight on the 13th, crushing the Duck box on it and partially blocking the Apprentice Path, inspection thankfully showed the box to be empty. The first Skylark of the year was heard singing over the Main Field on the 15th and the noise of the Linnets chattering whilst perched in the trees and the hedgerows had been immense, with numbers increasing to over 500 on the 17th. On the 27th, the new Winter Bird Crop was mown, ready for ploughing. The wind and rain overnight on the 30th/31st brought down the 2nd half of the Willow tree at the top of Corner Wood, blocking the path and bringing down a large Ash branch with it!

April came around, bringing sightings of a Stoat crossing the river at the cattle drink, using fallen tree limbs as a bridge. The first Butterfly transect survey of the season recorded Brimstone, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock butterflies. Ploughing of the new Winter Bird Crop took place on the 7th, followed by harrowing on the 9th, and a male Wheatear, two Pied Wagtails and four Linnets were seen feeding on the newly turned soil. On the 17th, the Bluebells were starting to open in Corner Wood and a Stock Dove flew out of the Barn Owl provision in the Wildlife Tower on the 18th. The Mandarin Ducks appeared to be nesting in the replacement box by the Cattle Drink by the 23rd. A record number of Early Purple Orchids were counted - 146 growing within Kiln Close. The new Winter Bird Crop site was seeded and harrowed on the 26th, we also sowed a nectar strip along 2 edges. On the 28th, a Barn Owl was seen in daylight within the Wildlife Tower in North Park and that evening seen again, flying over the Orchard and the Main Field. April broke our rain record - we had 125.8mm of rain over 16-days, this is 221% of our average for the month - 59.96mm.



Red Deer captured on the trail camera

Three Rabbits were seen grazing by the First Field Shelter, mid-afternoon on the 1st of May, a very unusual sight on the LLP. Mallards had stirred up both ponds on the 2nd. The previous 'Crop' site was beautiful, mainly pink and white with Campion and splashes of yellow from Forage Rape. Patches of Germander Speedwell and Stitchwort could be seen in the long grass. A trail camera recorded our first sighting of a Red Deer on the reserve, crossing the river by the Cattle Drink. A Barn Owl had been seen flying over the reserve, office and aviaries screeching repeatedly every dry evening from dusk, sometimes for several hours. By the 26th, we started to get an increase in butterflies and damselflies, notably the Beautiful Demoiselle. A swarm of over a 1,000 bees flew over the Main Field on the 30th heading towards the Field Shelter end of Pennsland Lane.



Sparrowhawk in LLP
Photo by: David Ramsden

On the 1st of June, volunteers began pulling Creeping Thistle in Main Field, this task was continued on the 6th. The new bird crop had been growing very slowly, only the Sunflowers were visible, however 1 mm of rain fell on the 10th which was enough to give everything a boost, and by the 15th some of the Sunflowers were almost 1 foot high. The Skylark, last heard on the 23rd May, was back again, singing over the crop during the early evening. It then moved to back over the Airstrip and could be heard singing most of the day from the 16th to the 19th. We were delighted to see a Dipper flying upstream, near the fence boundary in Corner Wood, on the 16th. The Corn Chamomile in the nectar strip were coming into bud by the 19th and some of the Sunflowers were now 18" high. Volunteers joined Harry for more Creeping Thistle pulling on the 20th.

This year's Bracken Bashing started on the 4th of July, beginning in Kiln Close, lots of Grasshoppers, Great Green Bush Crickets, Butterflies (Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Small Skippers) and Six-Spot Burnet Moths were seen. A hung-up Silver Birch tree at the end of the long boardwalk on the Apprentice Path came down overnight with the rain and wind, taking out lots of Hazel with it. Our annual Butterfly Walk took place on the 5th and species seen included the Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Large and Small-Skippers, Ringlet, Small White, Large White, Comma, Silver-washed Fritillary, Red Admiral and Gatekeeper Butterflies.



Great Green Bush Cricket
Photo by: Harry Hingston

The nectar strip along two sides of the Winter Bird Food Crop was looking magnificent in red, white and blue - Poppies, Corn Chamomile and Cornflowers. Great views were had of a female Kestrel flying over the Main Field on the 13th, hunting in the previous years 'crop' and eventually flying down over Kiln Close. On the 19th, a White Admiral Butterfly was spotted in North Park, gracefully flying around the woodland edge and nectaring on a patch of brambles. This is only the second sighting of this species on the reserve, the last was in July 2017. A female Kestrel was seen perched on top of North Park pole-box on the 21st, possibly a 1st year bird, and three Sand Martins could be seen hawking over the old Winter Bird Food Crop. Come to see this beautiful haven for wildlife! You can see the dates of our upcoming guided walks listed in Diary Dates - [page 2](#).

Futureproof Office Rebuild



The Trust's old offices in February 2023 before the demolition started in May

Thankfully, after making us jump various hurdles, Dartmoor National Park finally approved our office rebuild (phew!) and we are extremely grateful to Daren Thomas (of A-Tec Design) for doing the architects drawings and the entire planning application completely free of charge. An even bigger "THANK YOU" goes to the thoughtful folk (RIP Peter Blood, Maureen Theresa Bird, Edward John Layton, Arthur Cooper Stafford, Heather Hynes, Barbara Joan Barber and Gillian Trevor) whose generous legacies has made the rebuild possible - for which we will be eternally grateful.

As you can imagine, sorting through contents of our old office (35 years of accumulated 'stuff') was a truly mammoth task. With a fantastic effort from us all, we down-sized as much as possible and then shoe-horned the remaining 'stuff', including our staff(!), into our Meeting Room (you can see this in the main photo above - to the left of the green offices) built in memory of Norman Alderson - which used to look huge but suddenly felt rather cramped, to put it mildly. The working conditions are obviously not ideal, but everyone is coping well with almost no disruption to our enquiry service and customer care - although if you phone us,



Demolition in full swing



Demolition almost complete - our donated digger put to good use once again!



All the offices now demolished, ground being levelled ready for the rebuild



Floors and walls starting to take shape



Here comes the roof!



Windows and Insulation start to be fitted

you might notice a significant increase in 'background noise'!

The old offices were quickly demolished and as much as possible has been reclaimed including the timber and windows. Even some of the insulation is going to be reused in the new build. Groundworks have commenced well and our builders, Futureproof Building Ltd, are being extremely sympathetic to the environment, not breaking any bedrock and not damaging flora or fauna. Luckily, the surrounding Bluebells had finished flowering before works began. The new building will be as environmentally friendly as possible with thickly insulated floor, walls and roof.

Running costs will be greatly reduced with underfloor heating and an air source heat pump, powered by electricity from the solar panels installed in 2012 with a wonderful legacy from Peggy May Fullman. We will have disabled access for the first time and designated working spaces for the Admin and Conservation Teams, leaving the Meeting Room free for meetings, project work, volunteer tasks, and events.

After the demolition and the ground levelling, progress seemed to slow down a little whilst awaiting supplies but once they were received it was amazing how fast the floor and walls started to appear! By the end of the second week in August, the windows, doors and insulation had started to be fitted...and the roof is being felted as I type! It really is coming on in leaps and bounds and hopefully in September, or maybe October, we'll have a fantastic new office. We are so looking forward to it! Our very own 'futureproof building'. In the grand scheme of things of course, only the transformation of the world's energy sources and food production systems can futureproof us, but at least we are doing our bit and spreading the word to others.

We look forward to sharing photos of the completed build in the next issue of Feedback and perhaps you would like to join us on a guided walk next year and see our beautiful nature reserve and new offices in person?! Check out our Diary Dates on [page 2](#).

All photos by BOT

Sam Tully
Admin and Legacy Officer

In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of:

**Pamela Fraser Bewley, Irene Mary Draycott,
Gillian Fay Grimwood, Sheila Lesley Howard,
Gillian Mary Trevor & Leslie Withey.**

and donations in memory of:

**Sue Bragg, Timothy Butler, Janet Crosby,
Michael David Davis, Dorothy Mellersh,
Marlene Reeve, William Richard Roy Trevennen
& Irene Watson.**

*Our grateful thanks and sincere
sympathies go to their families
and friends*

In June, we heard the sad news of the passing of Stephen Taylor, a BOT volunteer aviary cleaner in the 1990's. Our Head of Conservation, David Ramsden and Trustee, Frances Ramsden, attended the beautiful celebration of his life.

Breeding Season 2023

In early summer, the Trust undertakes an annual monitoring programme to assess Barn Owl productivity at sites across Devon, and in East Cornwall. Most sites receive at least one visit, and we check to see if any owls are breeding, roosting or absent. Where nesting occurs, the number of owlets are recorded (brood size), and a uniquely coded metal ring is carefully fitted around the leg of any young that are at the right age. Adults are also ringed where possible, but more often than not they are roosting away from the young. The rings are issued by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and all ringing is carried out under the necessary license. Tagging birds in this way gives us vital information on dispersal distances, survival rates and longevity.

This year, we obtained observations from 72 Annual Monitoring Sites, 11 of which have nest cameras that the Trust obtained with funding from Devon Birds. These cameras are fitted inside the nestbox and, in some cases, the site owners accessed images that enabled us to time our visits to ring young, or to avoid unnecessary visits. Nine sites were dropped because of access problems or building developments, and 2 were not checked due to temporary issues. Nonetheless, 4 new sites were added, and we will be looking to introduce further replacements over the coming years.

In 2023, Barn Owls attempted to breed at 42 of the 72 sites checked. This gives a nesting occupancy of 58%. As you can see in our results table, this is greater than the mean of 51% obtained between 2007 and 2022. At 3.41, brood size this year was also better than the previous mean of 2.86. This brood size is based on the maximum number of live young observed, which is sometimes less when return visits are made to ring the owlets, or when young are observed as they first emerge from the nest site. However, the mean calculated by counting young at these later stages is 3.15, which is still 10% higher than normal. Thus, 2023 was a good year for Barn Owls in Devon and East Cornwall! Our monitoring work is only possible with the help of the owners

whose sites we visit, and we are hugely grateful to them, and to the volunteers who sometimes accompany us.

Dr Mateo Ruiz
Conservation and Science Officer

Year	Nesting (%)	Mean brood size	Regular roosting (%)	Occasional roosting (%)	Absent (%)
2007-2022 mean	51%	2.86	10%	5%	34%
2023	58%	3.41	8%	6%	28%
2022	55%	2.63	3%	3%	39%
2021	54%	2.97	2%	6%	38%
2020	-	-	-	-	-
2019	43%	2.72	7%	4%	46%
2018	59%	3.0	0%	3%	38%
2017	48%	3.24	7%	11%	34%
2016	39%	2.42	17%	3%	42%
2015	59%	2.67	10%	1%	29%
2014	46%	4.15	12%	7%	35%
2013	17%	2.13	27%	14%	42%
2012	68%	3.23	6%	2%	25%
2011	42%	2.63	17%	5%	36%
2010	60%	2.35	12%	1%	27%
2009	61%	2.5	7%	3%	30%
2008	62%	2.6	11%	2%	25%
2007	58%	3.7	12%	4%	27%

Results table of annual monitoring from 2007 to 2023, showing site status as a percentage of the total number of sites checked, mean brood size, and the averages obtained over the last 15 years of monitoring.

Call From The Wild

In their last December issue, The Countryman magazine published an article on the plight of the Barn Owls and what can be done to help. The article, written by Simone Stanbrook-Byrne, beautifully describes the magical experience of watching a wild Barn Owl before outlining the main hazards facing today's Barn Owls. See below for a few snippets from the article:

The Countryman

"Turning onto the farm track that leads to my house I brought the car to a swift halt. A mighty ash tree, felled by a recent storm, was caught in my headlights. But this wasn't the reason for my sudden stop, for sitting in its branches, looking over the rough pasture of the field beside the track, was a beautiful barn owl. Lit by my lights, the bird sat there, as motionless as I now was. For years I had been hearing tawny owls around our house but this was the first time I'd seen a barn owl. We sat there, the owl and I, for several minutes. I watched the bird; the bird watched the field, scanning for small furries and seemingly oblivious to my presence. Then he took off, a scrap of winged moonlight gliding silently down the field and out of sight. It was an encounter of sheer magic..."

Rough grassland provides an ideal habitat for the small creatures the owls need, but the loss of such land to the intensification of farming, as well as the loss of old trees and barns to, for instance, building projects, has caused serious challenges for our declining owl population. Road kills account for many deaths and the widespread use of rodenticides, which then pass their poison up a polluted food chain, is another key factor in owl mortality...

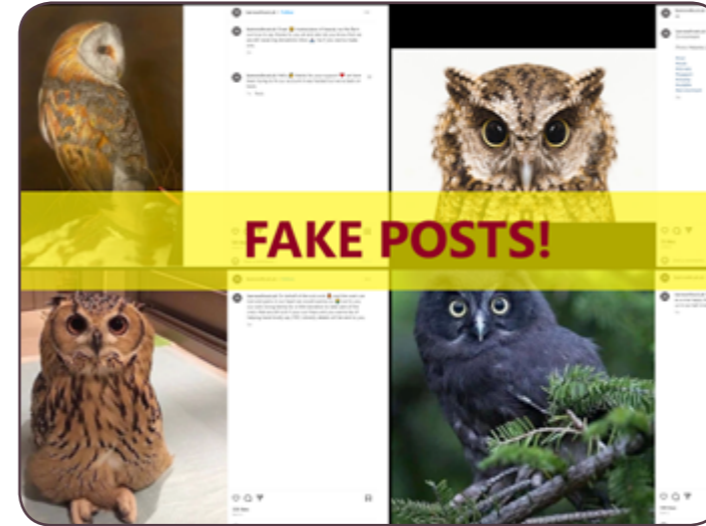
So, what we can do to help? Nestboxes can be installed in modern agricultural buildings or on poles or trees at suitable sites. Barn conversions can include inbuilt provision for owls. Troughs can be fitted with purpose-made floats (guidance for this is on the BOT website: barnowltrust.org.uk). Landowners can manage the places of which they are custodians with wildlife in mind. The trend towards "wilded" areas is helping...

A healthy and biodiverse wildlife population is indicative of a healthy wider environment, and all life on Earth is dependent on that, be it mice, owls or humans. An encounter with a barn owl is a rare and precious thing and we can all take steps to reverse environmental degradation so that such encounters remain precious but become less rare."

To read the full article, please see the December 2022 issue of The Countryman: <http://pocketmags.com/magazine-offers/country-publications/barnowlmagazine>.

Pip Laker
Conservation Officer

Instagram Account Hacked



In early May, our Instagram account was hacked and stolen. When we realised what had happened, we followed all the steps to attempt to recover our account. However, because the hackers had changed the username, none of our old passwords were linked to the new username and we couldn't recover it that way. One of the last resort things Instagram does is asks you to upload a selfie video to their reporting system so they can identify you. We tried this with a few of the staff who have featured on our account, however it didn't work. We tried, through various channels, to contact Instagram, Meta and Facebook, but with no luck. There is no way to contact a person and none of our reports received a response...then the scammers began using our account!

We started receiving threatening emails from the hackers and we followed advice and did not respond to any of them. When it became clear that we were not going to regain control of our account, we proceeded to report it as fraud and impersonation. We also reported the scam to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and Action Fraud, who accept reports of cybercrime issues and forward them to the police. Frustratingly, we had no positive response from anyone! Our priority was then to contact our followers and supporters. We managed to get one last post out on the account, through our Meta suite, to say we'd been hacked. It stayed up for 24 hours before the hackers took it down. We put posts out on our Facebook and Twitter pages, and on our website, and we emailed everyone who has agreed to be on our mailing list, warning them and asking them to report and block the account. We had hoped that if enough people reported the account, Instagram would be forced to take it down. We had no way of contacting our nearly 9,000 followers on Instagram. We reached out to other organisations and friends and asked them to inform their followers. Some of those put out stories and posts across their social media platforms, which we are hugely grateful for, and we hope reached some people.

The posts that the scammers put up were quite clever. Their first few posts were of owls, but not British ones, and although the English was not perfect, their requests for money for sick owls could absolutely pull on the heart strings. Their latest posts included a photo of a Barn Owl and a comment saying that the account was hacked but is now back on track. Of course, that was not the truth of the matter at all. We have been sent screenshots of messages that have been sent to individuals. These messages always ask for money for "sick owls". We hope that no one got pulled into this scam and, if they did, hopefully the ask of money to be sent via digital currency/crypto-currency stopped them at that point. If you received any messages, we are truly sorry.

With a stroke of luck, at the end of June, one of our supporters put out a call for help on his LinkedIn page. This particular supporter has friends who work for Meta and managed to get in touch with someone who could resolve our problem. The next thing we knew, we had our account back after 10 weeks! It was a huge shock and relief to us after all the weeks of battling and all the stress! By this time we had lost hope that we would ever get it back!

We have since been busy messaging the hundreds of people the hackers contacted to apologise and explain, sending out emails to our mailing list and contacting everyone we contacted before to let them know they can now unblock us. What a rollercoaster! From what we can see, no one actually sent the hackers any money, which is a huge relief.

We are now working with a local cyber security company to increase our security levels across the Trust, to do our best to ensure nothing like this, or worse, happens again. Please make sure that your social media accounts, personal and business, are as well protected as you can make them. We thought we were safe, but we now know just how clever the hackers are and have found out that, sadly, this happens a lot. Thank you everyone for your understanding and support.

Kaye Thomas
Administrator and Digital Media Officer

BOT Prize draw 2023

The Annual Barn Owl Trust Christmas Prize Draw has been launched and has got off to an amazing start. Last year we beat our prize draw fundraising record and with the prizes on offer this year, we hope to surpass that this December.

One of our prizes from last year was a beautiful carving of a Barn Owl by Scott of Scott's Chainsaw Carving. It was won by Helen who told us; "I have eventually finished oiling the beautiful wooden sculpted owl ready for the garden. I am really thrilled with it. Thank you".



*Helen Lawes pleased with her prize!
Photo by: Sam Tully*

Scott is again challenged with carving another superb sculpture for this year's draw, so keep an eye on the website for pictures when it is complete!

Tickets are on sale now and are £1 per ticket or £5 for a book. The draw takes place on Wednesday 6th December so there is still plenty of time to buy tickets. You can purchase them through the website's donation page (www.barnowltrust.org.uk/support-us/donate/) putting 'Draw Tickets' in the 'reason for donation' box or by sending us a cheque made payable to The Barn Owl Trust with your ticket stubs or stating how many tickets you require.

The prize draw list for this year is varied and nationwide, to give as many supporters as possible the opportunity to enjoy a prize. A full list of this year's prizes can be found on our [website](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) and keep an eye for more prizes being added over the coming months!

Sam Tully
Admin & Legacy Officer



Charity Information

Barn Owl Trust

Waterleat Ashburton Devon TQ13 7HU
01364 255256 info@barnowltrust.org.uk
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity number 299 835

BOT Environmental Enrolment Number 203 178

Trustees: Keith Grant (1990) Frances Ramsden (1988) Simon Wilson (2000)
Kevin Keatley (2010) Ed McNeil (2020) Hon Treasurer: Mark Pountney (2002)
Secretary: Gill Gant Minutes: Kaye Thomas, Anne-Marie Glenn

Management Team:

David Ramsden - Head of Conservation Gill Gant - Office Manager

Independent Examiners: Francis Clark LLP
Chartered Accountants Sigma House, Oak View Close Edginswell Park Torquay, Devon TQ2 7FF
Solicitors: Wollen's Carlton House 30 The Terrace Torquay, Devon TQ1 1BS
Bankers: Triodos Bank UK Deanery Rd Bristol BS1 5AS Lloyds TSB 31 Fore Street Totnes Devon TQ9 5HH

The stated objective of the Trust 'is to advance the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and other endangered species, to provide them with a safe breeding environment, with the object of encouraging the re-creation and preservation of appropriate ecological conditions that they may be provided with the means to continue and flourish in as natural an environment as possible'.

The main areas of the Trust's work are practical conservation, education, provision of information and research. The Trust also responds to live owl emergencies and provides a sanctuary and rehabilitation facility for injured owls. The Trust became a registered charity in 1988.

Practical conservation and rehabilitation work takes place in South West England (mainly Devon and Cornwall), but all other areas of work have national (and sometimes international) significance: e.g. the free information and advice service is available by post, email, telephone and via the worldwide web. Our research work is relevant throughout the UK and beyond.

The Trust also leases 26 acres of land from the Barn Owl Legacy Trust (BOLT) which was purchased with a legacy in 2001. This is known as the Lennon Legacy Project and is managed entirely for wildlife. What was once intensively grazed pasture has become a haven for birds, butterflies, flowers and insects under BOT management. Monitoring and recording the ever-increasing biodiversity and promoting habitat creation by others is a significant part of the Trust's work.

TRUST STAFF

TRUST VOLUNTEERS

OFFICE MANAGER : Gill Gant
HEAD OF CONSERVATION : David Ramsden MBE
SENIOR CONSERVATION OFFICER : Matthew Twigg*
CONS. & SCIENCE OFFICER : Mateo Ruiz
ASSISTANT CONS OFFICER : Pip Laker
Tim Wilkins
Holly Stewart*
DIGITAL MEDIA OFFICER : Kaye Thomas
INTERN : Harry Hingston
ADMIN ASSISTANTS : Marianne Bryan
Anne-Marie Glenn
Jessica Munday
Vanessa Lewis
LEGACY PROJECT : Sam Tully
Lisa Fordham*
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Jasmin Ramsden
Joel Turnbull
Chris Allen
Emily Smith
Aiden Lawley
SCHOOL VISITS/TALKS : David Ramsden
Mateo Ruiz
COMPUTER/IT SUPPORT : Alan Lewis
ACCOUNTS : Frances Ramsden
HONORARY SOLICITORS : Wollen's
VETS : Veterinary Hospital (Estover)
Westmoor Vets (Tavistock)
City Vets (Exeter)
BTO RINGING COORDINATOR : Keith Grant
EDUCATION VOLUNTEER : Baley the Barn Owl
LIVE OWL EMERGENCY HELP & OWL TRANSPORTATION : Fiona Anderson
Margaret Rhodes
Bill Bishop, Sylvia Marshall
Esther Van Delft
PRACTICAL SUPPORT : Kim Baker*
Tony Hulatt
FEEDBACK MAGAZINE : Marianne Bryan

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Ambios Trainees Jackie Atkinson Rick Barton
Caroline Fawell Judith Read Saleh Alfulaj
Chris Marshall Kim & Ed McNeil Steve Martin
Di Hawkings Lisa Fordham Tim Dowling
Diane Baker Margaret Rhodes Jeanne Silvestri
Emily Peacock Michael Park Western Power
Hazel Gruber Plymouth Uni Students Distribution (WPD)

Barn Owl Trust staff and volunteers often have several roles, only their main areas of work are listed here.

* Indicates those leaving during the period of this report

BOT Environmental

BOT Environmental is an Enrolled Body under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. It was set up in 1998 to allow the Trust to apply for grants from landfill operators who can give money to community or environmental projects rather than pay tax to central government. There was no BOT Environmental activity in the year and both the opening and the closing balance of the fund at the year end was £0.

Annual Report 2022 - 2023



Welcome to the Annual Review of our latest financial year 2022-2023. The year began with our Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) course going online. Because of Covid our in-person courses stopped in March 2020 resulting in a waiting list, this meant that 70 of the 189 people who completed the course during the year signed up in April. Work on the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) course is in preparation, and we hope to have it completed for April 2024.

We also published our State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2021 in April, using data collected from 37 groups across the UK. The year showed a promising start for Barn Owls with overall nesting occupancy 9% higher than average. However, despite the overall optimistic start of the breeding season, visits to 5,669 sites showed the brood size was 7% below the average of all previous years and only revealed a slight improvement upon the poor year of 2020. Here in Devon our annual monitoring visits showed both nesting occupancy and average brood size were above the long-term average. However, absence rate was also above average, meaning many sites were left untenanted.

Guided walks around our 26-acre nature reserve, the Lennon Legacy Project (LLP), resumed in April and included four winter bird walks. The site has benefitted tremendously during the year by the employment of intern Harry Hingston, as trainee Reserve and Volunteer Co-ordinator in July. This has meant that a tremendous amount of practical work and wildlife monitoring has been possible. We purchased two wildlife trail cameras which revealed amongst many other things, a visiting Woodcock in daylight, a Red Listed species.

At the beginning of June, Western Power Distribution (WPD) apprentices returned to the site and replaced the bridges and boardwalks along the Apprentice Path, originally built by other WPD apprentices in 2010. They also began work on the first of three field shelters planned for the reserve, the materials for the first shelter and for the bridge and board walk restorations were provided by WPD. This field shelter in the main field was completed by staff and volunteers in April 2023. We continued to record and report on the monthly changes in our online Wildlife Diary.

In September Senior Conservation Officer Matt Twigg and Conservation and Science Officer Mateo Ruiz visited the Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT). The visit included a trip to UWT's new land at their Slievenacloy Reserve in the Belfast Hills, a farm visit, a Barn Owl Working Group meeting at Castle Espie, and a visit to a Barn Owl nest site owned by the National Trust.

The 'Wings of Change' presentation for schools and youth groups has been a staple part of the Trust's work since 1988 and is given in-person, on-line and is available on DVD. This year the team

Management Information

The Barn Owl Trust was constituted in December 1987 and became a national registered charity in July 1988, it is governed by a Trust Deed. The objectives of the Trust, as stated in our Deed, are 'the conservation of wildlife, especially the Barn Owl and the preservation and re-creation of appropriate ecological conditions to provide a natural environment for wildlife to flourish'.

The Trust has five Trustees. The year of their appointment is listed next to their names in the Charity Information. New Trustees are chosen by the existing Trustees, when required, on the basis of their relevant expertise.

The number of Trustees is required to be between three and five, and in the event of the number falling below three the remaining Trustees may only act for the purpose of appointing additional Trustees and for no other purpose.

The Trustees have full and unrestricted powers of investing monies as decided by a majority. The Trustees have adopted a formal policy on general financial reserves (see page 16).

Day-to-day running of the Trust is the responsibility of the Management Team (Senior Staff) who are line-managed by and liaise regularly with individual Trustees and report at quarterly Trustees meetings. ★

has been working on a new and updated presentation - 'Flying into the Future' which should be ready to present in the next financial year. Also, during the year an upgrade of our website began. This involves creating hundreds of new pages in a new style (theme) and transferring the content which will result in a 'new-look' mobile-friendly site. This work is due to be completed in the next financial year.

Despite our website having plans and videos on how to make nestboxes, we sold 656 boxes during the year. Our income from sales was less than the previous year as in January 2022 we had to register for VAT as income from nestboxes (and their carriage), which took us over the VAT threshold. We made the decision to hold the prices and absorb VAT cost and the increase in materials ourselves. Sale of boxes is a significant source of income which helps support the cost of running our Conservation Team.

There have been several staff changes during the year. We were very sorry to lose Senior Conservation Officer Matt Twigg when he moved on to work for Natural England after 16 years here. New staff have joined our conservation, admin and nestbox teams.

A significant legacy from Peter Blood and other legacies during the year enabled the Trustees to apportion funds for the rebuild of the office. The existing wooden building was originally built just after the second World War with additional insulation and extensions built when we started using it as an office in the early 1990's. In 2011 we had a purpose-built Meeting Room added using funds from a legacy from Norman Alderson. With the old offices needing significant repairs and redecoration, the Trustees decided that replacing them with an energy efficient new build, to the same standard as the Meeting Room, would be more cost effective than trying to keep the old building going. It would also be a more pleasant environment for staff and volunteers, helping to future-proof the Trust. Although a significant outlay is needed for the rebuild, we expect to see savings in energy consumption and a return on the expenditure over time, rather like the solar panels which were installed in 2012 and made possible by a legacy from Peggy May Fullman. Thanks must go to Daren Thomas of A-Tec Design for designing the building and doing the drawings for the planning application and building control. We are really grateful for his support.

Prior to the pandemic the Trustees had proposed and agreed to convert the Trust from a Registered Charity, to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), making it easier to recruit Trustees by limiting personal liability. Following approval at the Trustee Meeting of 27/10/2022 of a draft CIO constitution, a new CIO was registered by the Charity Commission on 21/12/2022. At the end of the next financial year, we plan to transfer the assets and facilitate a smooth and seamless transition of legal status from the Charitable Trust called The Barn Owl Trust (Charity Number 299835) to a CIO called Barn Owl Trust (1201419).

An amazing £700,000 legacy from Gillian Grimwood, was notified to us during the year covered by this report but received in the next financial year. This is the largest legacy, by far, that the Barn Owl Trust has ever received. As with all legacy income, the Trustees want to use the funds most effectively to 'conserve Barn Owls and the Environment'. Because this was such a large amount, an Extraordinary Trustees Meeting was held in May 2023 where ideas generated by the staff, volunteers and trustees were discussed and a plan was drawn up. The legacy has been ring-fenced by the Trustees as Designated Funds.

With climate change increasing rapidly and nature declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history the Climate and Ecological Emergency must be our focus in the coming years. It is essential that sustainability is the key to everything we do now, not just at work but in our whole lives. We will, as always continue to give environmental and ethical consideration to all our activities here at the Trust and to the purchase of resources.

The Trust is now in its 35th year and we have a great team here, together we have achieved a tremendous amount over the last three and a half decades. On behalf of all of the Trustees, I would like to thank our staff, our volunteers and everyone that has supported us and who have made this possible. *Together we can make a world of difference.* Thank You All

Keith Grant Chair of Trustees, July 2023 ★



Conservation Report

State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2022



The most up-to-date figures on the UK Barn Owl population were published in our report: [State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2022](#), based on results provided by 44 independent monitoring groups who between them checked 5,404 potential nest sites. 2022 was generally a very good year for breeding Barn Owls across the UK. Nesting occupancy was 37% above the average value, with an impressive 1,807 active nests recorded. Increases of over 50% in nesting occupancy were recorded in Cheshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Ulster, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire. Only West Berkshire (-5%), Buckinghamshire (-10%), Galloway (-8%), Jersey (-22%) and Sussex (-6%) reported declines in nesting occupancy. Despite the substantial increase in active Barn Owl nests, the overall mean brood size was only 3% higher than the average of all previous years. Across regions, the greatest increases in brood size were seen in East Cleveland (33%), Northumberland (27%), Somerset (33%), Suffolk (35%) and Wiltshire (27%). Only Jersey (-52%) and Warwickshire (-19%) observed noticeable decreases in brood size.

We checked 61 of our own annual monitoring sites in Devon and Cornwall and found very similar results to the national picture - a good year for nesting occupancy but average in terms of brood size. We did find two pairs breeding simultaneously within 80 meters of each other, a close second to our 'closest nests record' of 60 metres.

The Lennon Legacy Project (LLP) – our nature reserve



Volunteers hedgelaying in the LLP *Photo: Harry Hingston*

As regular readers will know, we are extremely fortunate to have a 26-acre nature reserve thanks to the generosity of Ms Vivien Lennon, who remembered the Barn Owl Trust in her Will, and (by chance or good fortune) to the land becoming available shortly afterwards.

In July 2022, the LLP benefitted tremendously from the appointment of our first intern, Harry Hingston, as Trainee Reserve and Volunteer Co-ordinator. Having someone dedicated

to the LLP has enabled a tremendous amount of practical work and wildlife monitoring. Two wildlife trail cameras recorded, amongst many other things, a Woodcock feeding in daylight - another Red Listed species. Harry has greatly increased the number of volunteers and a wide range of tasks, including the laying of the North Park hedge, were completed.

Despite not sowing any, Fodder Radish and Corn Marigold dominated our Winter Bird Food Crop completely negating results from the seed mixture we'd paid for! Fortunately, the birds and the pollinators didn't seem to mind. Linnets returned to the site in July 2022 and their numbers built up through the winter peaking at 500+ in March 2023.

At the beginning of June, Western Power Distribution (WPD) apprentices returned to the site and replaced the bridges and boardwalks along the Apprentice Path, originally built by other WPD apprentices in 2010. They also began work on the first of three Field Shelters planned for the reserve, the materials for the first shelter and for the bridge and board walk restorations were provided by WPD. All three will provide shelter for the resident Goats, Swallows, Bats, and Barn Owls plus a small mammal feeding station.



WPD Apprentice Project 2022 *Photo: David Ramsden*

In the financial year 2018-2019 we marked out three areas of 10x10 metre quadrats where we managed creeping thistle in different ways with the aim of publishing a report with recommendations as to the most effective way to deal with this invasive species in rough grassland. This year we counted the thistles again in July to discover whether there have been any after effects of the various management prescriptions. The report, being compiled by Dr Mateo Ruiz in his role as Conservation and Science Officer is due to be completed in the coming financial year.

Visiting Ulster Wildlife Trust

In September, our Senior Conservation Officer Matt Twigg and Conservation and Science Officer Mateo Ruiz visited the Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT). The possibility of a visit had initially been discussed as far back as Autumn 2019, but the trip was postponed twice due to Covid. Barn Owls are rare in Northern Ireland. UWT have recorded only 7 nests, not all in the same breeding season, and they estimate there are probably no more than 15 nests across the whole of the province. They erect about 20 nestboxes a year and monitor around 50, although this is increasing. The small mammal population is quite different in Northern Ireland (NI); there are no Field Voles or Common Shrews, which are so important to Barn Owls in Great Britain. Consequently, the Wood Mouse takes on much greater dietary importance, with Brown Rat coming in second in more urban habitats and Pygmy Shrew in more rural ones. The visit included a trip to UWT's new land at their Slievenacloy Reserve in the Belfast Hills, a farm visit, a Barn Owl Working Group meeting at Castle Espie, a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Strangford Lough and a visit to a Barn Owl nest site owned by the National Trust. One of the tree boxes there had been used for nesting in 2022, but unfortunately had attracted the

attention of a Pine Marten. Of the brood of four, one had died of natural causes, two were killed, with only one being taken away by the Marten, and one survived. Pine Martens are fairly common in NI, despite being a protected species, and this is a concerning development in light of the relative rarity of Barn Owls there.

Team changes



Matt supervising the building of the Kingfisher Wall in 2016 *Photo: Lexi New*

There have been several staff changes during the year. We were very sorry to lose our long-standing Senior Conservation Officer Matt Twigg when he left to work for Natural England as a Marine Ornithologist after 16 years with us. Thankfully, new staff have joined including Harry Hingston as Trainee Reserve and Volunteer Co-ordinator and Tim Wilkins as an Assistant Conservation Officer (ACO) 2 days/week. Another ACO Holly Stewart joined at the same time as Tim but only stayed a month as she decided the role wasn't for her. We are planning to recruit another ACO in the new financial year.

During the year, we would not have coped without Dr Pip Laker who had joined us in February 2022. Pip not only provided 'enquiries cover' while Matt and Mateo were unavailable but covered the bulk of our conservation enquires throughout the entire year. We have never before had a member of staff who became so good at dealing with enquiries so quickly.

Core activities

Incoming owls - 17 casualty owls were received during the year of which 5 were Barn Owls outnumbered by the far more common Tawny Owl. Of the 17, 4 died, 4 were euthanised and we are very pleased to report, 9 were released. In addition, we took in one emaciated Sparrowhawk which died, and a Barn Owl in our sanctuary died.

Fieldwork trips - conducted during the year included 62 visits to Annual Monitoring Sites, the erection of 29 Barn Owl nestboxes, one Tawny Owl nestbox, and repairs to a further 5 nestboxes. An additional 18 fieldwork trips covered activities such as habitat advisory visits, pellet collection, owl surveys, filming, nest camera installations, and the clearing out of nestboxes.

Talks - Seven 'Wings of Change' Barn Owl talks were provided in junior schools, one of which was delivered online, and 10 'Restoring the Balance' talks (about Barn Owls and the work of the Trust) were given to adult groups, one of which was online. With the Trust's support, our Head of Conservation presented his own 'Climate and Ecological Crisis? What's all the fuss about?' talk 24 times during the year. We also created and delivered several bespoke talks, one for a Barn Owl Working Group meeting in Ireland, two talks for AMBIO trainees and one for a conference run by 'Conservation Chat UK'.

The 'Wings of Change' - a presentation for schools and youth groups has been a staple part of our work since 1988, but this year we began work on a replacement. Instead of starting in the past, ending in the present, and telling the story of Barn Owl decline, our new story 'Flying into the Future' starts in the present and depicts what's likely to happen to Barn Owls in the foreseeable future. Although both stories use the Barn Owl as a vehicle for delivering a much wider message about the countryside, the new story, for the first time, includes the impacts

of climate change. The 'Wings of Change' will no longer be given unless it's specifically requested. Over the last 35 years it's been a great story to tell and has been heard by many thousands of children.

Enquiries - During the year, a staggering 19,114 communications or transactions were recorded on our database of which there were 7,991 email enquiries and responses. Nestbox enquiries alone accounted for 703!

Other Information provision - Of course, our website deals with many more enquiries than we ever could in person and received 2,179 page views a day. That's a staggering 795,503 page views in the year by 381,989 unique visitors. Our YouTube channel which hosts our short information/instructional films had 133,313 views this year and reached 4,700 subscribers. Our most popular video 'An introduction to the Barn Owl' passed half a million views.

During the year we began the massive task of upgrading our website. This involves converting hundreds of pages to a new style (theme) and updating the layout and content, which will result in a new-look site which, unlike our current site, will display well on mobiles and tablets.

Events - After a two year pause due to Covid, we attended the Devon County Show, Royal Cornwall Show, Meldon Wildlife Festival, Celebrate Start Bay, FarmWise, Conservation Chat UK, a Thorncombe Environment Group event, and University of Plymouth Students Union volunteer fair.

Training Courses - To start the year off, our on-line training course 'Barn Owl Ecology Surveys and Signs' was launched on David's birthday 4th April 2022. We've had an overwhelming amount of positive feedback, including some people saying it's the best online course they have ever completed. 100% of the people who responded to "Did you enjoy the BOESS course?" said yes. 189 people signed up for the course during the year. Work on our Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation (ABOSM) stalled due to the seasonal limitations of filming but we hope to have it completed for April 2024.



Photo: Kevin Keatley

Crisis awareness - Raising awareness of the climate crisis is nothing new for us. The first talk given by the Barn Owl Trust in 1988 contained a photograph of Didcot coal-fired power station and a strong message about the environmental consequences of burning fossil fuels. That was the same year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was founded and before they started issuing such warnings. Today we still unashamedly use people's interest in Barn Owls as a way of increasing their environmental awareness because we know, and you know, that no single species can survive in isolation. For Barn Owls to thrive, the environment must thrive. As we can all see, this is not the case. According to the United Nations we are "on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator". It's up to all of us to do everything we can.

Annual Reports such as these cannot possibly convey how much work actually goes on. Here we have given you a glimpse of the work our wonderful staff and volunteers do, so a huge thank you to all of them.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to all our supporters without whom none of this work could have been carried out. Thank you very much indeed.

David Ramsden MBE
Head of Conservation



Financial Report

S.O.F.A. Statement of financial activity



This has been a remarkable year for legacies and donations in memory with the Trust receiving an unprecedented £262,055 in the year and notification of another £700,000 payment due after the year end which had to be included in these accounts. This pushed our income to an incredible £1,323,041, 340% of the previous year meaning that we needed to apply to the Charity Commission for an exemption from audit as this was an Extraordinary Circumstance and this was granted on 27th July 2023. We are always extremely grateful for the legacies and the gifts in memoriam we receive. It is previous years' legacies that enable us to bridge the difference between our income and our expenditure and to have the reserves to survive the years we have a deficit. Legacies not only enable the Trust to continue to achieve so much of our general conservation work, but they also allow us to invest in special projects including the Kingfisher wall, the building of our new website, the purchase of the Lennon Legacy Project land (LLP), the creation of the two ponds in the LLP, the Meeting Room and the Solar Project. This year they have allowed us to plan and allocate funds for the office rebuild and the Trustees have already met to develop a plan to use the exceptional legacy, shown as an accrual in the accounts. At the time of writing, the office rebuild is underway and progress can be followed on the news pages of our website. Legacies accounted for 73% of our income with grants and donations at 14% - £178,859.

Income from our charitable activities was 11% - £149,185 of total income and enables us to be less dependent on grants and legacies. Our income from nestbox sales was 6% of income, however it was 9% less than 2022 at £74,451 (2022 - £82,136). We now pay VAT on income from nestboxes and have not passed this on to customers so a direct comparison with the previous year isn't straight-forward. Income from our training courses generated £57,743 (2022 & 2021- nil, 2020 - £38,988) which accounted for 4% of our total income. Other charitable activities generated £16,991 (2022 - £41,545); a decrease of 59% compared to 2022 when we received payments from Kier Highways for project work. Fundraising and the sale of promotional goods were both up but together accounted for just 1% - £16,990 of income as did income from other sources - £15,952.

Overall expenditure increased by 13% to £404,246 (2022- £359,056). Expenditure on Charitable Activities was £384,436; 13% higher than 2022 (£339,150). The cost of practical work increased by 23% to £197,586 (2022 - £160,082). The information and advice service costs decreased by 5% to £99,636 (2022 - £104,493). All salaries were increased by £2,000 across the scales during the year; this unusually high increase was due to the cost-of-living crisis. Total salaries increased by 20% to £252,433 (2022 - £209,591). The cost of fundraising decreased by 2% to £12,332 this year from £12,525 in 2022. Fundraising still accounts for just 3% of our total expenditure, and includes time spent applying for grants. We spent 1% more on promotional goods £7,478 (2022 - £7,381); this generated £14,939 income (2022 - £13,560). Support costs include telephone, repairs, overheads such as insurance, water and electricity, stationery, management, cost of payroll, and office cleaning. These necessary costs have increased by 14% over the year to £32,121 (2022 - £28,125) and account for 8% of expenditure.

Continued on page 15

THE BARN OWL TRUST				
BALANCE SHEET				
AS AT 31st MARCH 2022				
		2023		2022
	Notes	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	5		45,530	42,010
Current assets				
Stock	6	13,016		12,911
Debtors	7	706,095		20,077
Cash at bank and in hand		792,712		557,157
		1,511,823		590,145
Liabilities				
Creditors - Amounts falling due within one year	8	21,762		15,358
Net current assets		1,490,061		574,787
Net assets		1,535,592		616,797
The funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds	9	1,503,894		592,834
Restricted funds	10	31,698		23,963
Total charity funds		1,535,592		616,797

SOFA Note 2.			
Income			
		2023	2022
		£	£
(a)	Donations and legacies:		
	Grants and donations	178,859	157,605
	Legacies	962,055	87,571
		1,140,914	245,176
(b)	Charitable activities:		
	Nestboxes	74,451	82,136
	Training courses	57,743	-
	Other	16,991	41,545
		149,185	123,681
(c)	Other trading activities:		
	Fundraising	2,051	1,424
	Promotional goods	14,939	13,560
		16,990	14,984
(d)	Other income:		
	Solar generation	4,890	4,637
	Bank interest	5,051	570
	Other	611	16
	Sale of fixed assets	5,400	-
		15,952	5,223
		1,323,041	389,064

	Notes	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
		2023			2022		
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	2	1,115,994	24,920	1,140,914	219,865	25,311	245,176
Charitable activities	2	149,185	-	149,185	123,681	-	123,681
Other trading activities	2	16,990	-	16,990	14,984	-	14,984
Other Income	2	15,952	-	15,952	5,223	-	5,223
Total		1,298,121	24,920	1,323,041	363,753	25,311	389,064
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	3	19,810	-	19,810	19,906	-	19,906
Charitable activities	3	369,853	14,583	384,436	315,062	24,088	339,150
Total		389,663	14,583	404,246	334,968	24,088	359,056
Net (expenditure)/income		908,458	10,337	918,795	28,785	1,223	30,008
Transfers between funds		2,601	(2,601)	-	16,568	(16,568)	-
Net movement in funds		911,059	7,736	918,795	45,353	(15,345)	30,008
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		592,835	23,962	616,797	547,482	39,307	586,789
Total funds carried forward		1,503,894	31,698	1,535,592	592,835	23,962	616,797

Financial Report continued

Our management costs have increased, mainly due to additional accountancy charges because of VAT; they are now 5.3% of total spend £21,441 (2022 - £13,822). Despite this, because of our volunteers, we can keep management and other costs down. Volunteers continue to be an invaluable asset to the Trust, assisting in every aspect of the work including practical tasks, administration, clerical work, and fundraising, as well as the provision of professional services.

We saw a net surplus of £918,793 for the year (2022 - £30,008) however, of the unrestricted funds available to the Trust, the Trustees have allocated £406,339 as a reserve for the next financial year, and £965,555 for other projects including the Office Rebuild and allocation of the new legacy, leaving a general fund of £132,000 (2022 - £201,673). However, our fixed assets and stock account for £58,546 (2022 - £54,921) of this and considering the regular shortfall in income vs. expenditure (excluding legacies) we expect to have to start drawing on these reserves. The Trustees continue to look carefully at all outgoings.

The Barn Owl Trust has now reached a significant milestone, 35-years as a registered charity, and we are extremely grateful to all our supporters who have helped us over the years with donations, grants, legacies, and volunteer effort. We couldn't have done it without you.

Mark Pountney MAAT - Honorary Treasurer

SOFA Note 3				
Expenditure				
	Activities	Governance	Total	Total
	Undertaken	and Support	Total	Total
	Directly	Costs	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£
Raising funds:				
Fundraising	-	12,332	12,332	12,525
Promotional goods	-	7,478	7,478	7,381
	-	19,810	19,810	19,906
Charitable activities:				
Nestboxes	33,536	-	33,536	45,201
Training course	6,000	-	6,000	-
Practical work	210,643	-	210,643	160,081
Information and advice	99,636	-	99,636	104,493
Grants and donations	-	-	-	-
Support costs	-	32,121	32,121	28,125
Independent examination	-	2,500	2,500	1,250
	349,815	34,621	384,436	339,151
	349,815	54,431	404,246	359,057



Thank You

We are very grateful to the following charities, businesses and other organisations who have supported our work with grants, sponsorship or donations in kind during this financial year. Thank you!

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
 Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust
 Portreeve of Ashburton
 Barker-Mill Foundation
 Blair Foundation
 Carron Charitable Settlement
 Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust
 David and Julia Hunter Charitable Trust
 Dr and Mrs Alfred Darlington Charitable Trust
 Edna Smylie Memorial Fund
 Fred & Marjorie Sainsbury Charitable Trust
 Graham & Henreitta Somervell's Wildlife Trust
 Grocers' Charity
 Hamamelis
 Ian Askew Charitable Trust
 Joan Cullen Charitable Trust
 Jack Patston Charitable Trust
 Lindeth Charitable Trust
 Lord Faringdon Charitable Trust
 Lowther Charitable Settlement
 Mabel Cooper Charity
 Marjorie Coote Animal Charity Trust
 Marsh Christian Trust
 Michael and Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust
 Pennycress Trust
 PF Charitable Trust

Pilkington General Charity
 Princess Anne's Charitable Trust
 Radcliffe Foundation
 The Ofenheim Charitable Trust
 Scott (Eredine) Charitable Trust
 Sir John and Lady Heathcoat Amory's Charitable Trust
 Stella Symons Charitable Trust
 The Barry Green Memorial Foundation
 The Cobalt Trust
 The Dumbreck Charity
 The Gerrick Rose Animal Trust
 The John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust
 The Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust
 The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust
 The Rainford Trust
 The Sir Henry Angest Foundation
 The SMB Charitable Trust
 The William Dean Countryside and Educational Trust
 Valerie Ayton Charitable Trust
 Verdon-Smith Family Charitable Settlement
 Veterinary Hospital Group
 Wakefield Trust (Devon)
 Walker 597 Animal Trust
 Walter Guinness Charitable Trust
 Wildlife Watching Supplies
 William Geoffrey Harvey's Discretionary Settlement No 2

During this period we received legacies from:

Arthur Cooper Stafford, Barbara Joan Barber, Dr. Oliver Wilson, Edward John Layton, Elizabeth Mary Knibbs, Gillian Grimwood, Mrs Gillian Trevor, Heather Hynes, James Roy Ward, John Colebrook, Margaret Anne Davies, Maureen Theresa Bird, Pamela Fraser Bewley, Pamela Veronica Bower, Paula West, Pauline Laws and Peter Blood.

and Gifts in Memory of:

Alma Noakes, Clifford James, Dorothy Reed, Gwen Skuse, Irene Mary Harrison, Janet Crosby, Josephine Bailey, Mabel Hunt, Margaret Morgan, Martin Rowe, Michael David Davis, Mr & Mrs Cody, Nora Webber, Pamela Anne Brown, Patricia Siddons, Peter Bond, Richard Yonge, Sandra Reardon, Sylvia Elizabeth Linington, Timothy Boraston and Valerie Russell.

Rest In Peace



Donations from sponsored events and other fundraising were received from:

Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright for sale of their Owl Mug Cosies, St Michael's Primary School for holding a charity sale, Catherine Williamson for funds from a plant sale, The Clockwork Moth Theatre Company for collecting donations whilst on tour, Christine Carter and the Bickington Lunch Club for holding a Soup fundraiser, Crosby High School for making and selling pine cone decorations, Sir Thomas Rich's School Boys for running a pop-up Cafe fundraiser, Josh McDowall for running the London Marathon, and Warley Road Primary Academy for holding a Winter Bazaar.

Thank you all so much for your support

Team Talk & Supporters News

Hello and Goodbye

Since the last issue of Feedback we have said our farewells to Helen from the Admin Team and Holly from the Conservation Team who both moved on to new adventures. We are currently recruiting for a new Assistant Conservation Officer and we are very happy to introduce you to Lucy Bruckner, the newest addition to the Admin Team.

Lucy joined the Admin Team here at BOT in April 2023, just prior to the big re-build of the original administration buildings, and is enjoying getting to know everyone involved in the Trust.



A life-long lover of nature and the countryside, Lucy lives 'out in the sticks' not far from Ashburton, with her husband and various dogs. Lucy has a new found hobby of agility training with her lurcher Rew, and spends sunny days in the greenhouse or losing the battle with her fast growing garden. She has recently started bird watching with friends and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

Open Garden in Memory of Dorothy



Dorothy Mellersh loved nature and together with her family, developed her garden and adjoining meadow into a haven for wildlife over a 45 year period. She was particularly fond of Barn Owls and so in June her family held a garden open day in her memory to share her garden and meadow, and to raise much-needed funds for the Barn Owl Trust. Over 200 people attended and helped raise more than £5,000 and the family hope to make this an annual event.

Josh Completes Marathon Challenge!

The London Marathon is one of the most wonderful examples of people power on the planet! Thousands of people taking to the streets of our capital city, each with individual goals and aspirations. Their training for this big day began many months before, as did mine. The atmosphere of the London Marathon is quite special. A coming together of like-minded individuals whose overall goal is to make their efforts worthwhile in the form of change, sponsorship and awareness for their chosen causes, charities and organisations, as well as the personal challenge of completing this prestigious event.



As I crossed the start line, I was feeling relaxed, confident and fast. A feeling that continued for the first eight miles. Then as I was into mile nine... "uh oh!"... my injury decided to surface and my leg muscles began tightening and cramping! As I limped into mile thirteen for a much needed pit stop, I watched my chances of attaining a sub three hour marathon slip away. Due to my stubborn demeanour, I was now left with only one option... To grind it out 'til the end as merely giving up was not an option for me! With gritted teeth and a routine of stop, stretch, walk, run, repeat, this soon became my improvised method for making it through the remaining 13 miles.

The decision to run my marathon for the Barn Owl Trust was one which was heartfelt and personal. I have a close affection for these majestic birds and to have an opportunity to raise awareness and go the extra mile for them and the wonderful organisation that champions them, was a challenge only to be embarked upon with considerable pride and honour.

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."
 (Dr Jane Goodall DBE)

My marathon training was going very well, I was hitting all my targets and my dream, other than participating in the London Marathon, was to complete the 26.2 miles in under three hours! This dream was looking very achievable. That was until I picked up an injury six weeks before marathon day which forced me to stop running entirely! This was not part of the plan! With rest and physio treatment, I approached the big day with dogged determination and a positive mind-set that everything would be fine on race day albeit not having done any mileage since my injury.

Preconceptions of the iconic finishing straight, arms raised and an expression gleaming with utter elation was somewhat very different in reality. The gleam was more of a grimace and the sprint finish was more of a hobble! However, the atmosphere and support of the crowds was infectious and the constant thought of what I was doing this all for was the fuel needed to get me to the finish line. Despite my marathon not going to plan I still completed it in a very respectable time of 3:52. With final sponsorships now in, I am pleased to say that my efforts weren't in vain. A total of £1,628.40 raised for the Barn Owl Trust with an estimated £280.60 of gift aid on top!

Would I do it again? Well... considering I'm already planning my next marathon and fundraising for nature ideas whilst still suffering with my injury, should answer that question! And give you an idea of my determination to push for greater things no matter how tough the journey is. Individually we can make a difference, together we can make a change!

Josh McDowall
BOT Supporter

Photo Provided by Josh

A Comparison of Rural, Semi-urban and Urban Barn Owl Diets, Using Pellet Analysis

Kathryn Webb

I first contacted the Barn Owl Trust in July 2021 when I was looking for possible opportunities for the dissertation project towards my Applied Animal Science degree, and I was grateful to be given the chance to collaborate on this interesting study. By investigating the diets of Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) insights can be provided into the species' ecology, prey and habitat preference, and distribution, which can in turn aid conservation and management. The Barn Owl pellets were collected from nest boxes within three locations in the South of England. Licensed workers collected the pellets, as Barn Owls are protected by legislation (The Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981).

Shakinah Ravindran (Barn Owl and Rodent Research Group at Universiti Sains, Malaysia) began the project by analysing sample 3, the 75 urban pellets. Dr Mateo Ruiz (Barn Owl Trust Conservation and Science Officer) and Harry Hingston (then Conservation with Forestry BSc at Bangor University) analysed 51 pellets from sample 1 (semi-urban pellets), and 23 from sample 2 (rural pellets), throughout the end of 2021. The author conducted the final analysis of the remaining pellets from sample 1 (19 pellets) and sample 2 (52 pellets) throughout the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022 (Figures 1 and 2).



FIGURE 1. Pellets were divided into batches to be soaked overnight in a 10% bleach (NaOH) solution. Figure shows drained pellet physical remains drying in a bowl and the required equipment: sieve and gloves for soaking and draining pellet mixture, scope and guide for identifying remains. Tweezers were used to extract bones from the pellet matrix, and remains were cleaned with soft brushes to aid accurate identification.

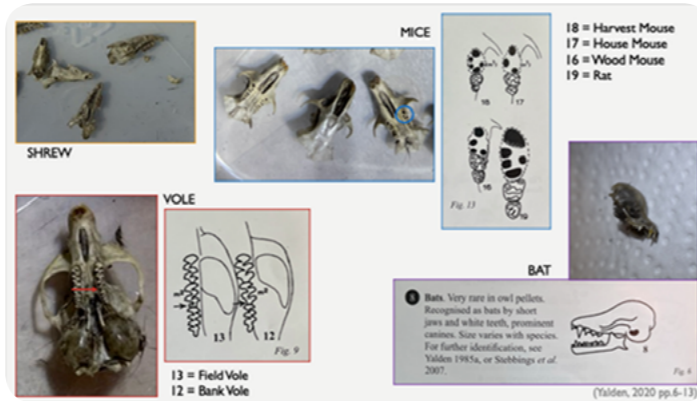
FIGURE 2. Once skulls and mandibles were located and cleaned, they could be roughly identified and placed into tubs, individually assigned to a species.



Small mammal species identified from skeletal remains in the pellets included: Field Vole (*Microtus agrestis*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*), Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*), Bank Vole (*Myodes glareolus*), Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), House Mouse (*Mus musculus*) and Harvest Mouse (*Micromys minutus*). Field Vole, Wood Mouse and Common Shrew constituting the majority of the diet, as supported by previous research.

Voles, mice and rats were identified using guidance from the textbook: *The Analysis of Barn Owl Pellets* by Yalden, 2020. Identification is largely reliant upon the dentition of the species. For mice and rats, the first upper molar must be extracted, and the number of root holes counted (Figure 3). Identification of the vole species relied upon the zig-zag pattern/shape of the maxillary molars, with a distinguishable loop on the second upper molar on the tongue side for a Field Vole, which is absent in the Bank Vole (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Figures adapted from Yalden (2020 pp.6-13) alongside images taken by the author of prey species identified during the study. NB. A bat skull was identified from a practice batch of pellets but could not be utilised in this study - it is included here for reference.



For the shrew species, guidance on the measurements for Tooth Row Length (TRL) was used to conduct identification (Balčiauskas, 2004). TRL was measured with a digital calliper for accuracy. Water Shrew (*Neomys fodiens*) are rarely found in Barn Owl pellets so were discounted from the study.

The data collected was analysed and compared, to investigate whether any differences could be observed in the diets between each sample site, and to determine if the level of food availability might influence Barn Owl habitat selection or population decline. Considerations were made regarding possible factors impacting Barn Owl diet at each location, such as habitat type, anthropomorphic actions, temporal changes, and Barn Owl distribution.

Results were analysed using the statistical testing software SPSS and concluded that there were no statistically significant differences between the diets of Barn Owls from any sample area. This meets expectations from previous studies that Barn Owls can successfully inhabit even the more urbanised or agricultural habitats; and suggests that all three sample areas are supporting a suitable abundance of prey species to sustain the Barn Owls in the location.

Despite identifying no statistical difference between the percentage of prey found in each sample site, the highest per-pellet number of prey items was found in pellets from the rural habitat (Figure 4), suggesting that rural areas do have a greater abundance of small mammal populations.

Data was also converted into biomass percentages (adapted from Smal 1987), to investigate how the weight of each individual species contributed to the Barn Owl diet. For the urban data, Field Voles made up a slightly higher percentage of the biomass when compared to the other sites, suggesting that the urban diet contained less prey variation overall. The results from this research were also compared to nationally collected data

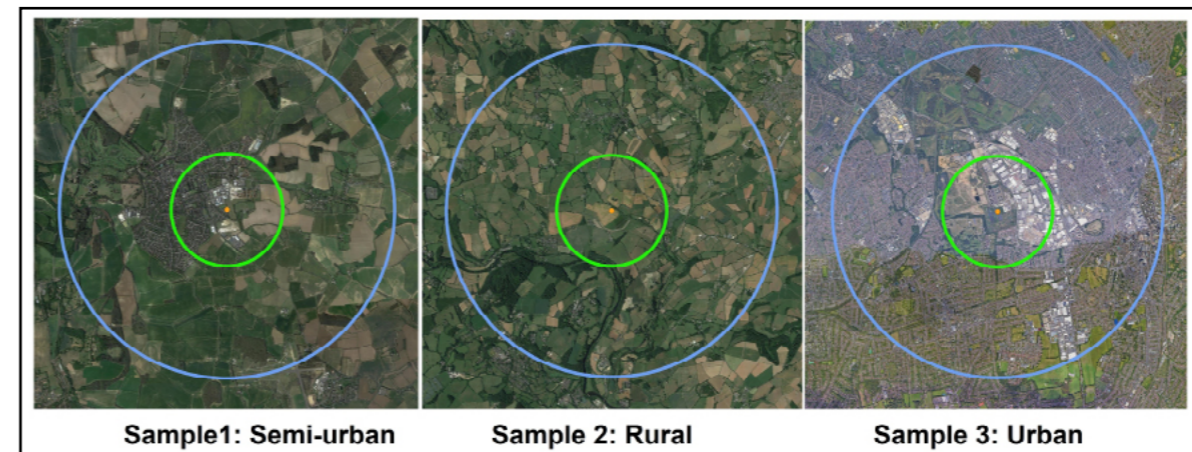


FIGURE 6. Satellite maps of Sample Areas 1, 2 and 3, with 1 km (yellow) and 3 km (blue) buffer zones. Prepared in QGIS: QGIS Development Team (2021). QGIS Geographic Information System. Open Source Geospatial Foundation Project. <http://qgis.osgeo.org>.

(Figure 5; National data taken from 1997 data in table 2 of Love et al. 2000).

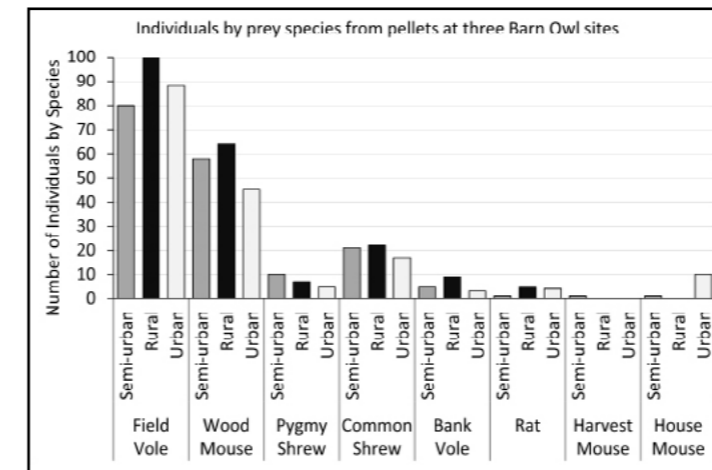


FIGURE 4. Bar chart showing the numbers of individuals by species for the main species identified in Barn Owl pellets from semi-urban (sample 1), rural (sample 2) and urban (sample 3) nest sites.

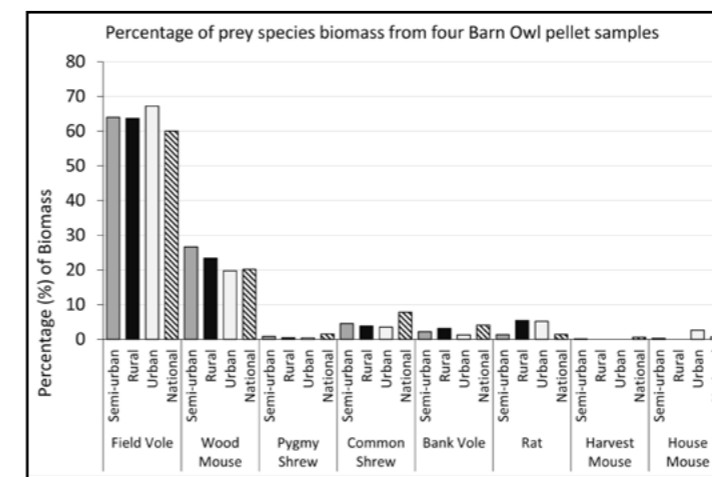


FIGURE 5. Bar chart showing the percentages of biomass by prey species identified in Barn Owl pellets from semi-urban (sample 1), rural (sample 2), and urban (sample 3) nest sites, and from Mammal Society National Pellet Survey (sample 4, from Love et al., 2000).

The Geographical Information System QGIS was utilised to input the coordinates and generate a 1 km and 3 km buffer zone around each sample site via the addition of a shapefile, to represent approximate breeding and non-breeding home range areas. A satellite image layer was used to provide visual indication of the type and size of habitat available to the Barn Owls within

each location (Figure 6). This was beneficial for adding detail about the Barn Owl habitat to the analysis.

Evidence supported the view that population decline is predominately driven by factors other than diet availability within the different habitat types, likely including road traffic casualties and the bioaccumulation of poisons across trophic levels. Habitat management to preserve suitable foraging grounds for Barn Owls, with mitigating features to prevent road deaths and secondary poisonings, were identified as top conservation priorities for Barn Owl populations.

To support the pellet analysis findings, further study could be conducted into the distributions and hunting patterns of Barn Owls within each site via GPS tracking, and into the extent of toxin build-up over trophic levels.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collaborative project involved invaluable help from Tomos Brangwy, Russel Savory, Simon Hurwitz, Harry Hingston, and Shakinah Ravindran.

The Mammal Society gave kind permission to use a figure adapted from their publication.

Matthew Twiggs provided technical support for QGIS work, and Rea Sims provided valuable supervision.

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Article by Kathryn Webb

Edited and supervised by Dr Mateo Ruiz Conservation and Science Officer.

Thanks & Things

A big thank you to all our supporters who have sent in items from our Wants List or goods for recycling: Julie & Carl Earrye, Alison Fripp, Chris Hoey, Honey Ingram, Clare Lovatt, Dennis & Barbara Madge, Jayne Manning, Kim & Ed McNeil, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright, David Philpott, Ilene Sterns, Brian & Janet Woodford, plus J Dilnot Smith & Son Funeral Directors.

Thank you to all our Prize Draw donators: Buckfast Butterfly Farm & Dartmoor Otter Sanctuary, Honey Ingram, Luscombe Drinks, Scotts Chainsaw Carving, Holly Hagg Farm, Sandridge Barton Wines, Scottish Seabird Centre, Dartmoor Walks this Way, Bletchley Park, Rafikis, Royal Yacht Britannia, LBW Drinks, South Devon Railway, Creeping Thyme Restaurant, Stratford Butterfly Farm, Barn Owl Inn, House of Marbles, Cotswold Motoring & Toy Museum, Pipers Farm, Cotswold Farm Park, National Space Centre, Sarah Taylor Art, Butser Ancient Farm, Moretonhampstead Motor Museum, Sally Coultard, The Eden Project, Butterfly World & Farm Park, Coppet Hill Glamping, Haynes Motor Museum, Exeter Chiefs and Pat Le Hérisssier.

A huge thank you must go to our wonderful volunteers: Saleh Alfulaj, Ian Bailey, Diane Baker, Rick Barton, Tim Dowling, Steve Dyer, Caroline Fawell, Leah Fynn, Jane Goodall, Fiona Hailstone, Paul & Jen Hankin, Di Hawkings, Tony Hullat, Kim & Ed McNeil, Chris Marshall, Steve Martin, Michael Park, Judith Read, Melanie Reeves, Margaret Rhodes, Jeanne Silvestri, Caroline & Daniel Snow, Esther van Delft, Eleni Vreony and Mark & Jodi from Red Hot Products.

We would also like to say a special thank you to Estover Veterinary Hospital, City Vets and Huw Peplow at Seymour Vets Ltd for all their help with treating injured owls.

Thank you to all our fantastic fundraisers: Students of Warley Road Academy raised funds with a Winter Bazaar, Stephen Powles held a raffle, Exminster WI ran a tombola, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright sold more owl cosies and Josh McDowall ran the London Marathon.

Can you help us with:

- Folding saw horses/trestles
- ['Invertebrate Conservation and Agricultural Ecosystems'](#) book by Tim R New
- The hardback of edition 2 of ['The Little Owl'](#) by Dries van Nieuwenhuyse Et Al.
- Bungee Cords
- 2 - Seater Sofa (for new staff room)
- Buckets - approx 14 Ltr
- Hessian Sacks
- Electric chain saw - Stihl (cordless)
- Electric Strimmer/Brushcutter - Stihl (cordless)
- Metal Detector
- Used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- Postcards and pre-1970 envelopes with stamps on
- Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds & peanut
- Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised ply and lengths of 25 x 50mm tanalised batten
- Old newspapers (for owl boxes in our Bird Room)
- 2 covers for 50mm tow-balls
- Brightly coloured ripstock material for banner printing
- Socket set (48 pc 1/2 inch drive)
- Extra long drill bits (3,4 & 5mm)
- Wire cutters
- Quick grip clamps
- Box Trailer (minimum 2.4m x 1.5m x 1.8m high)
- Small plate compactor
- Small bales of hay and straw (can collect from S.Devon)

Thank you for your help.



Tail Piece

What a strange year we have had so far. We've been recording weather data here for 18-years and every month this year we've broken records. In January it was rain, 88% more than usual. February was our driest ever recorded. March had almost three times our normal rain and April more than double our average for the month. In May we had less rain, but the mean temperature for the month equalled our weather record at 13.2°C, 1.3°C more than the average here. In June we recorded that our mean temperature was more than 2°C higher than our average and in July it rained a lot, total rainfall was 243% of our average rainfall for the month. It was also more than 1°C cooler than the mean temperature.

Our weather patterns are undoubtedly changing and whilst so far, we have been lucky and able to cope with these changes, people and wildlife around the planet have suffered terribly from floods and fires. Crops are being affected around the World and here at home, with farmers struggling between drought and deluge to harvest their crops, this will ultimately be reflected in food shortages, higher prices and more refugees that can't feed their families. It's good to see that at last the BBC are mentioning climate change more often but unfortunately there is still, despite the increasing evidence, a severe disconnect between what is happening and how we as a species are dealing with it. Our politicians and our media are almost entirely failing to treat the climate and ecological crisis with the urgency it deserves and consequently action is slow and, in some cases, exactly the opposite of what we need....

Chris Packham's recent stunning series 'Earth' on the BBC looked at the history of our planet, evolution and the mass extinction events that have occurred in the past. It also highlighted that unless we act very swiftly, we are likely to be heading for another one and it's not just people that will go, it's the amazing, interconnected biodiversity that has evolved over millions of years, a sobering thought.

That burning fossil fuels would create climate change has been known 20 - Autumn 2023 - Feedback 70

about for more than a century and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created in 1988, the year the Barn Owl Trust hatched. However, our leaders have failed to tackle the problem and we are now in a position where we can see the effects, much earlier than many of us expected. We need policies that solve problems now. A change in the planning laws to ensure that all new developments are carbon neutral would be a start. Greater investment in Community Energy Schemes and in the National Grid would help.

Here at the BOT we are trying to 'future proof': our office rebuild will help to reduce our energy consumption and thanks to the generosity of our supporters, grants and legacies we have been able to install solar panels and buy electric vehicles. We know that this is not possible for much of the population, so this is where changes in political policy and investment are urgently needed. Improving public transport and reducing the cost would help to reduce dependence on vehicles and cut air pollution – 'each year in the UK, around 40,000 deaths are attributable to exposure to outdoor air pollution' – Royal College of Physicians. It's crazy that it's cheaper to fly to Scotland from Devon than to go by train.

Most of the changes that are needed are on a national and international level but we as individuals can have an influence. We can spread the word, we can vote for politicians that support a serious green transition whilst looking after the most needy in our society, we can eat food grown locally, move our money from banks that invest in fossil fuels and most powerfully of all we can think about how and where we spend our money, is it doing anything to help or hinder sustainability? Buying sustainably produced goods and food can send a very strong message. We can support small businesses rather than multi-nationals, we can protect our green spaces, look after local wildlife, plant for pollinators, we can look out for each other and for those less fortunate than ourselves, and, if enough of us do these things *Together we can make a world of difference.*

Frances Ramsden